**Zofran®**

**What is Zofran®?**

 Zofran® is a brand name of the drug ondansetron. It blocks the action of a brain chemical - Serotonin. Serotonin can act on the part of our brains responsible for triggering vomiting. When Zofran® blocks this function of serotonin, less nausea and vomiting occurs.

**Why is Zofran® prescribed?**

Zofran® is a medication that has been used frequently for more than a decade to treat nausea and vomiting of pregnancy. It is especially helpful when a patient has hyperemesis gravidarum: a condition in which the pregnant woman has excessive vomiting. It prevents women from becoming malnourished and dehydrated during this difficult time in pregnancy.

**Is Zofran® safe?**

 Zofran® has been considered very safe in pregnancy. The FDA lists Zofran® as a Category B drug for pregnant women. This means that there wasn’t any data in scientific studies to prove harmful effects. This is the same category they assign to Tylenol®.

Recently, a study was published that raised concern that Zofran® may cause a slightly higher risk of heart defects in babies. This study looked at 1,349 infants born to Swedish women who had used Zofran®. The rate of heart defects in these babies was about 1.6 times the rate of heart defects in the country on average. In the United States, about 1% of babies will be born with a heart defect. If the same increase in birth defects is seen here as in Sweden then we would expect about a 1.6% rate of heart defects in babies exposed to Zofran®.

 Let’s look at what that means in real numbers. Here at Christie Clinic OB/GYN, we deliver about 1200 babies per year. Using our numbers, we expect about 12 of those babies to be born with a heart defect. If everybody used Zofran®, we would expect about 19 babies to be born with a heart defect.

**Are there alternatives to Zofran®?**

 Yes. The FDA has also approved Diclegis® which uses a combination of a sleep aid called doxylamine and vitamin B6. This combination can be helpful for nausea but it can also cause drowsiness. It is FDA category A which means strong studies have shown its safety throughout pregnancy. However, it was less effective than Zofran® in a head-to-head comparison study.

 Another option is Phenergan®. This is a brand of the drug promethazine. It is FDA category C which means that some studies in pregnant animals have shown potential harm. It also is known to cause a significant amount of drowsiness.

 A final alternative is Reglan®. This is a brand of the drug metoclopramide. It is FDA category B. It can cause drowsiness. It can also cause dyskinesia and dystonia which is where your muscles make awkward movements without your control. This happens in less than 1% of people taking Reglan®. Reglan® has been shown to be equally effective as Zofran® in the treatment of hyperemesis gravidarum.

 Please let us know if there are any further questions we can answer for you as you consider taking Zofran® to help manage nausea and vomiting of pregnancy.

This article is not intended to provide specific medical advice and is not to be used or relied on for diagnostic or treatment purposes. Rather, this article is provided as an information resource only to help you better understand your health. It does not create any patient-physician relationship. You are urged to consult with a qualified physician for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment and for answers to your personal medical questions.